

County reviews 10-year comprehensive plan at open house



Kazi Haque, unit manager of planning and land use for Yavapai County, and Jessica Sarkissian, with Upfront Planning and Entitlements, inform county residents about the comprehensive plan. (Stan Bindell/For the Review)

Stan Bindell, For the Courier

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Yavapai County hosted a comprehensive plan open house at the Paulden Library June 14 to inform county residents about the 10 year comprehensive plan.

Only seven people showed up with questions during the three hours, but this was only one of eight public meetings at various spots in the county. However, more than 1,000 county residents have responded either through a survey or at meetings about what their concerns are for the comprehensive plan.

The Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan is primarily a land use plan providing policy guidance about where growth is appropriate and what form it should take. According to the county, the comprehensive plan looks at existing conditions and trends to set out a vision for future growth, goals and policies grouped by topic. The topics include land use, growth areas, transportation, water resources, energy, open space, environmental and cost of development.

The county literature states that the comprehensive plan is neither a pro-development or anti-growth plan. The county is seeking citizen's vision for the plan. The county also points out that a zoning code is about what is allowed today while the comprehensive plan is a map for what may be allowed in the future.

The Paulden meeting was hosted by Kazi Haque, unit manager of planning and land use for Yavapai County; and Jessica Sarkissian, land planner for Upfront Planning and Entitlements, which is contracted by Yavapai County to work on the comprehensive plan.

Sarkissian said they hope the county's comprehensive plan will be adopted by the end of the year by the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors. She said the final draft should be ready for public view by the end of September. It will be sent to all cities and towns in Yavapai County.

She said aside from the public meetings that they have also met with 32 groups to inform them about the comprehensive plan and answer questions.

Haque said everything is fluid until the Board of Supervisors approves it and it will go to county's Planning and Zoning Commission first.

Sarkissian points out that the county doesn't have jurisdiction in some places such as state trust land; however, the county can coordinate with the state on land issues.

Haque said the county is widely diverse as the cities and towns in the county can be extremely different. Some are more tourist based than others. Regarding the surveys, he said they look for valid points. He said some of the comments in the survey didn't make sense because they were based on misinformation.

During the Paulden meeting, one person expressed a desire to see more places for off road vehicles. Haque said, pointing out the differences in communities, that this wouldn't fly in Sedona.

Sarkissian said some of the issues that people want addressed would cost money that the county doesn't have. However, she said in some cases they can apply for grants to obtain the funding.

Haque said one of the main concerns county residents have is water, just as this is also an issue statewide.

“People want riparian corridors. They are also concerned about their aquifers and unchecked growth. People are concerned about running dry. That’s the input I’m getting,” he said.

Haque said one resident attending the Paulden meeting wanted to know the water situation for the Big Chino aquifer. He said some people already have to haul water.

Last year there was a proposal by a water advocacy group to protect the watershed, but it did not pass.

Sarkissan said a lot of people want more open space.

“Everybody wants it, but nobody wants to provide it,” she said. “They want recreation areas near the river.”

Sarkissan notes that the county has no parks and recreation department. There are some county parks, but those are maintained by the cities they are in.

“People want pools and playgrounds, but there is no funding for it,” she said.

One area of wide agreement among county residents is they want more dark sky areas—meaning more places where they can see the stars without obstruction from lights. He said energy is another issue as county residents want more charging stations for electric vehicles. He said people also want more solar panels.

Another concern is traffic with tourists clogging up roads. Another transportation concern is public safety when storms hit.

“We need to prioritize which roads come first,” she said.

Affordable housing is another widespread concern. Haque is proud of a pilot program by Yavapai County Development Services which would provide free architectural design services. The program is called “A Home of My Own.” Customers can choose from one, two or three bedroom homes. Eighteen building permits have been approved through this program with more pending.

Haque said this program is a good start, but only a drop in the bucket. He said if someone can build the home themselves using these designs it could cost \$80,000 instead of \$400,000. He said if they need to have a contractor build the house then the prices would vary.

Regardless of the issue, Haque said the county wants residents to contact them regardless of where they live in the county.

For more information, go to the website at www.planningyavapai2032.org or email planning@yavapaiaz.gov

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